

R.O. Jones' Letters from the Newfoundland Coast, 1937

David R. Jones

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DAVID R. JONES

INTRODUCTION

AS A CHILD I KNEW Newfoundland as a realm of myth. From my father, the writer of these letters, I heard the story of how, on graduating from medical school, he had had to learn to pull teeth before leaving for that island, and of how he had pulled some 2,000 (surely an exaggeration!) during the summer of 1937.

Other tales recounted how he had nearly drowned when a collapsing iceberg inundated his ship, or how he had administered morphine to a man dying of a burst appendix, who was receiving the last rites at the same time. Much to his amusement he, rather than the priest, later received popular credit for the patient's subsequent, "miraculous" recovery. Visually, these legends were illustrated by his souvenirs, the small brown photographs of small houses on rocky and wooded shores, of the near fatal iceberg, of the fabled schooner *Bluenose*, and of the equally legendary Zeppelin *Hindenburg* passing overhead. On the back of many of these tiny prints is inscribed the simple, pencilled notation indicating the copy for "The Doctor."

During that summer my father, Robert Orville Jones, began his long career as a physician as medical officer on the Canadian Government Ship (CGS) *Arras*. With it he accompanied the Lunenburg fishing fleet to fish cod on the Grand Banks off Newfoundland. He was born the son of Jessie Barteaux and Orville Clarke Jones

in Digby County, Nova Scotia on 31 March 1914, into a family without medical or sailing traditions. My grandfather had begun work at age 15 as a water-boy during construction of the “missing link,” the portion of the Dominion Atlantic Railway (DAR) that ran around the Annapolis Basin to connect Annapolis Royal and Digby. In time he became station master, as well as proprietor of his own Riverside Inn and Garage, in nearby Bridgetown (where my father attended school). When fire destroyed O.C. Jones’ own hotel, he became manager of the chain of DAR and Canadian Pacific resorts that included Yarmouth’s Lakeside Inn, the Digby Pines, Kentville’s Cornwallis Inn, and Halifax’s Lord Nelson Hotel. Incidentally, he was a founder of the Apple Blossom Festival as well.

My grandfather’s own ambition had been to study medicine and his success made it possible for his only surviving son to do so. Although his older, adopted sister Marjorie had become a nurse in Boston, when my father entered Dalhousie at age 16, he was the first member of his family to attend university. There he received a Bachelor of Science at age 19. During summers he worked at the Digby Pines and in 1931 he met the waitress and art student, Mary Eleanor Allen of Halifax, who was to become my mother. Married in Halifax six years later, after his graduation at age 23 in May 1937, they planned to move to London. There he was to study internal medicine that autumn, and they both, therefore, immediately began their summer work. While he departed for Newfoundland on CGS *Arras* three weeks later, Mary went to Digby as her father-in-law’s secretary at the Pines Hotel. And since they were saving for their intended trip, he wrote her and his father jointly until the latter died from a heart attack in late July — an event that provided the occasion for his account of his journey on the famed “Newfie Bullet.”

This brief summary provides the background for the correspondence that follows. The letters themselves surfaced only three years ago. They are published here in full, with my mother’s permission, in a form that matches as closely as possible the handwritten originals. Perhaps because of his own rural background, as well as his recent marriage and enthusiasm for the practice of medicine, my father took pains to describe his companions, experiences and impressions of the world he observed along the South Coast and Avalon Peninsula. If these observations clearly are those of a “mainlander,” his letters nonetheless present a vivid portrait of the desperate poverty into which the Great Depression had thrust many Newfoundlanders. By implication, they also provide a contrast with conditions in the neighboring Nova Scotia of that day, a contrast which is perhaps worth considering at a time when some doubt the economic value of Confederation. For if his own prejudices emerge quite clearly, so too does his sympathy and respect for the courage and even cheerfulness with which many Newfoundlanders bore their lot. Furthermore, in England his own liberalism and recent impressions of prevailing poverty were given political form by the leftist ideology of the day and, despite his later disgust over the Ribbentrop-Stalin Pact of 23 August 1939, he retained his social-democratic outlook throughout his life.

One other theme deserves particular attention. In his study of Memorial College, *A Bridge Built Halfway* (McGill-Queen's, 1990), Malcolm MacLeod has pointed to the educational ties binding Newfoundland to Nova Scotia (and Dalhousie) in the pre-Confederation period. As my father's letters demonstrate, these were especially strong in the field of medicine. Not only was the Newfoundlander, Dr. Norman Gosse (a onetime resident of Spaniard's Bay) a faculty member of the Medical School, but during the summer many other teachers were active on the island. There they ran clinics, carried out public health surveys, and so on. That summer of 1937 was only the beginning of my father's continuing contacts with Newfoundland. Apart from developing a more defined political outlook, in England he became utterly fascinated with psychiatry when, along with the later Lord Stephen Taylor, a President of Memorial University, he worked as "houseman" at London's Maudsley Hospital in 1938.

At the urging of Dr. H.B. (Benj) Atlee, one of the most inspiring teachers at the Dalhousie School and long his mentor, my father then applied for and received a Rockefeller Fellowship. With this in hand, he and my mother left on the last peacetime crossing of the S.S. *Empress of Britain* for Baltimore in August 1939. There he joined the Phipps Clinic at Johns Hopkins for a two-year residency under the renowned adherent of the psychobiologic approach, Adolf Meyer. Returning to Dalhousie in 1941, my father later founded and headed that university's psychiatric department. As a professor, he once again became intimately connected with Newfoundland through a residency training program that, until the mid-1960s, brought him frequently on teaching trips to the St. John's "Mental."

My father's direct involvement with Newfoundland naturally slackened with the creation of a psychiatric department at Memorial's own medical school in the late 1960s, and after his retirement as head of the Dalhousie department in 1975. Nonetheless, his personal friendships with ex-students and colleagues remained strong and in August 1984 there were many on "the Rock" who mourned his passing. For by then, the relationship between this pioneer of Canadian psychiatric training and Newfoundland, the beginnings of which are reflected in the letters that follow, had ensured that his influence was as great there as in the rest of Atlantic Canada.

* * *

Canso N.S.

11:00 a.m. June 11/37.

(Sunday)

Dear Mary:-

We just got into Canso having had a delightful sunny sail up the coast from White Head (20 miles away) where we put up last night. So far we had a remarkably fine trip, scarcely a ripple on the water & have made the 130 miles to Canso in 15 hours. We planned to come up last night but it got very foggy & the Captain is scared as the devil of fog so we put in to White Head. My education is increasing in leaps & bounds & I now talk of port & starboard, forward & aft etc. with the greatest abandon. Everyone is very kind to me & seems to have a much exaggerated idea of the Dr's importance. I did my first surgery yesterday (opening a boil) & conditions are pretty bad as far as sterile technique is concerned. However, the lad feels better to-day so that's the critical test. Gradually things are working into shape & get better as we go along.

So far I have not felt a qualm as far as sea sickness is concerned but am knocking on wood as it really has been delightfully smooth so far.

Have missed you terribly in this short interval of time but after all [—] three months isn't eternity.

All my love for always,
Bob.

C.G.S. Arras off
John the Harbor.
Thursday, June 17, 1937.

Dear Mary & Dad:-

It costs 5 cents to send a letter from this country so I guess I'll have to economize & write two together.

It's a beautiful morning here, not a ripple on the water & bright sunshine. We're going down the south coast of Newfoundland with three Lunenburg fishing schooners in tow as there is not a drop of wind to help them. There are about 30 vessels in the fleet and all but 6 or 7 have motors now. They call these motorless vessels "dummy vessels." The sails look mighty nice but they're not nearly so useful a day like this.

Have had a beautiful trip so far & have enjoyed every minute of it. Lots of people pay money & buy yachts to take these excursions while I apparently get paid for sitting on my arse & basking in the sun, paid incidentally a little better than I thot [sic] — \$225 per month.

We left Canso at 7:00 a.m. Monday, a nice fine morning, up the coast of Cape Breton & left Scadderie [sic — Scatarie Island] — the last point seen of Nova Scotia at 2:00 p.m. The weather got very choppy then & we bounced around in fine style. I expected to get very sick, but I did not miss a meal, only felt a little squeamish once or twice & didn't vomit at all. Were under sail all Monday night & Tuesday morning sighted Newfoundland. We made Burin — our first port of call at 12:00 noon on Tuesday, a record run of 270 miles from Canso in 29 hours. There was no fog at all — only the second trip in 15 years under such favorable condition.

As far as I can see Newfoundland[,] its all rocks & scrub underbrush. Burin is a small fishing village about half the size of Sandy Cove [Digby Co.]. There is a small cottage hospital there with a resident physician who I am going to visit to-night. The Newfoundland hospital ship "Lady Anderson" was also in. It rained all the afternoon. I stayed aboard and had 15 patients between 3 & 7 p.m. — mostly coughs & colds but one dental extraction. I started it with fear & trembling but got along O.K. My local anaesthetic worked fine much to my surprise.

Wednesday a.m. we towed a vessel to Flat Island — 20 miles up Placentia Bay where the fleet gets bait. Came back yesterday afternoon to John the Harbor, a little place of about 4 houses but a nice little cove where we anchored last night. After supper the chief engineer & myself went fishing & lo & behold came back in a couple of hours with 10 fairly nice trout — 3 of which I caught. As it was my first real experience fly fishing I felt pretty good.

Are now on our way back to Burin where we will stay to-night & probably will push off for Cape Race to-morrow night.

Everybody is most kind to me — I just lie around in a deck chair on the stern of the ship & eat. The meals are plain but good. The captain & I eat in my office together & if you don't like what there is you can always have steak, eggs etc.

Burin incidentally is the place where they had the big tidal wave following the earth quake 9-10 years ago & half the town was washed away.

I wish you people could be up here. Dad would love the trout fishing right at hand. Sitting in the middle of the bay these nights with a half moon over the water is very lovely but rather unsatisfactory.

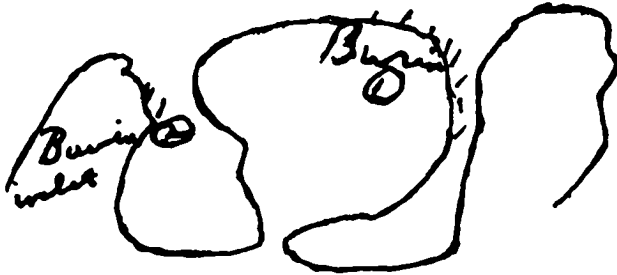
Love to you both,
Bob.

June 21, 1937
C.G.S. Arras
en route to Trepasse
Nwfd.

Dear Mary & Dad:-

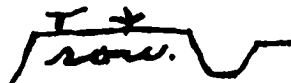
Am writing this in the middle of Placentia Bay on our way to Trepasse from Burin, a distance of some 80-90 miles. We left Burin at 7 a.m. & expect to arrive at Trepasse about 4 p.m. So far Burin has been our head quarters & we have just been cruising around within 20-30 miles of it as the fleet has been baiting there. I have had a couple of busy days but most of the time has been fairly quiet. Had 48 cases last week — lacerations, indigestions, lumbago, bronchitis, boils, diabetes etc. Among these there were about 15 dental extractions. I was greatly pleased with the way in which my local anaesthetics worked because I didn't know much about them, but so far have had great success.

Must tell you about Burin. Its a small fishing village, probably 400-500 population, sitting at the head of a fairly good sized harbor, completely surrounded by huge rocky cliffs (the whole country is rocks) & when you once get in the harbor



you look around and wonder where the hell you got in because you can see no break in the rocks. The highest of the surrounding cliffs is known as Cook's Look Out, that is where Capt. Cook established a look out in 1580 something [sic — 1765]. He made the first authentic chart of Newfoundland.

You cannot imagine anything as desolate as these villages. Most of the houses are small, flat roofed cracker box affairs standing on 3' wooden poles with absolutely no protection from the wind etc. All the surroundings are rocky crags with here & there a small garden patch made of soil collected by hand & washed down by the rains. These are stuck in the most amazing places, often on an angle of 80 degrees with the horizontal. How they manage to stand & work in them I don't know. Most of them are just starting potatoes. Each row is square about 1 1/2 feet across instead of coming up to a point the way ours do. Then there is a ditch about 9" deep between the rows, apparently to drain the water off.



One thing Burin has is plenty of churches, a Methodist, Anglican, R.C. & salvation army & lo & behold each maintains a separate denominational school.

Have been doing a lot of walking & the best place is across a small neck of land about 1 1/2 miles to Burin inlet where there is another small village. Here the front street runs right by the water side & is about 3 feet wide with fences & houses on both sides & sheep, goats & cows in the middle, a most picturesque place.

The main street of Burin is about 7 feet wide & in its length there are only about two places where cars can pass. To make it more interesting there are numerous sharp hair pin curves with a solid wall of rock on 1 side & a precipice down to the sea on the other. I had a car ride with the local Dr. & am still trembling.

There are dozens of things I could add but I'm exhausted now. As you may judge I'm having a great time & its most interesting.

Love to both,
Bob.

P.S. Heres the way my name looks on my reports:

R.O. Jones M.D.C.M.
M.O. G.G.S. Arras

C.G.S. Arras
Thurs. June 24/37.

Dear Mary and Dad:-

Am writing this from Cape Royal [sic — Broyle], a small fishing village, 40 miles this side of St. John's. The country around here has improved a little—still plenty of rocks & hills but on the whole flatter with an occasional green field.

We left Burin Monday a.m. & arrived in Trepasse that afternoon about 4 o'clock. Trepasse is noted for its fishing & we all planned to go after supper. I was just drawing my boots on to go when an old man arrived on the scene & asked if I would go see his wife who was very ill so that was that. We rowed over to the village and from 5:15 p.m. to 10:15 p.m. I went steadily from house to house & saw some 50 patients. They put the local taxi at my disposal & our longest drive was to Portugese Cove [Portugal Cove South] 13 miles away. The district contains some 1400 people & there is no Dr. nearer than St. John's 80 miles away. It was most pitiful, people lining the streets to stop the car & expecting me to do miracles on the corner. Among the cases was a pleurisy with effusions, a general peritonitis of 7 days standing, the biggest breast carcinoma I ever saw, a tumor of the bladder, numerous heart disease, several mal developed infants, numerous indigestions, rhuematics & the like and several bad neurasthenics. When I got back to the ship there were some 25 more people waiting there & I worked till 12:30 that night.

It was most interesting but it certainly showed up a lot of things I didn't know & how helpless I was when faced with many diseases. The only thing I don't like about such work is you never see the patient again & don't know whether the treatment was a success or not & can't change it if it wasn't.

Left Trepassé Tuesday a.m. & stopped at the wireless station at Cape Race & landed some stuff for the operator who lives there with his wife & 7 children. On the way up was very interested to see a whaling schooner at work. We see several whale each day as well as porpoises, duck, geese, gannets, shags, etc. Fairly large ice bergs are also floating around the vicinity.

Got in Cape Royal [Broyle] Tuesday night & have been surrounded by fog ever since. Tuesday night went trouting with the chief engineer but only got a couple. Several vessels have been in here so I have had a little work & several cases ashore — a very bad infantile diarrhoea last night who I feel must be dead by now probably.

In spite of all this it seems a devil of a long time since we left Nova Scotia.

Love to you both,
Bob.

C.G.S. Arras
June 27/37.
Cape Royal [Broyle], Nwfd.

Dear Mary:-

I expect Nova Scotia is an excited place to-day getting ready for the big struggle of the morrow. Now that the Louis-Braddack fight is over our next excitement is the elections & then no more till the Yacht Races the end of July. I'm glad the fight is over because the officers here on the whole are a prejudiced bunch of bastards who were disgusted to see the "nigger" win even if he was the better man (as no one denies). Such an attitude always arouses my ire.

Cape Royal [Broyle] is another small fishing village some 50 miles from St. John's with mail service three times a week so we're practically within reach of civilization. There's still no Dr. so I'm getting a little work that way & have even been paid \$3.50 from Newfoundlanders for services rendered (all in big 50 cent pieces). They don't trust bills in this country. I don't know the legality of such fees so don't say any thing about them. The baby that I think I told you about in my last letter died the next morning so I'm not so hot there. However, I am getting proud of my teeth pulling ability, particularly my local anaesthetics. In the two weeks I've been here have had about 130 patients. I wish I had a private practice like that at \$5.00 a visit.

We had our mail sent down from St. Johns so we got the Halifax papers to June 21st as well as your first 2 letters. Were you able to get any books from the Eaton's sale?

Enid [Johnson, later Dr. MacLeod] was in New Glasgow the Sunday when we were in Canso. I went up to the parsonage & saw her father for a few minutes. He told me she wasn't going to India but would intern this year. We won't be back in Canso till September on the way home.

Dr. [Carl] Woodbury's [dental] treatment seems very sound. I would't worry too much about the sweet foods though.

As for the books dear its too bad it happened but there is no use crying over spilt milk. The damage is done & we'll just have to take it. I wouldn't expend any money in repairs until later when we can check up on them. I hope you got them all in a safe place before you left.

We had an exciting experience the other day. There was a fairly large iceberg aground in the mouth of the harbor & as we came by we decided to stop & photograph it. We hauled the boat alongside & put the dingy over to get a picture. About 2 minutes later there was a loud crack & the whole thing broke up & collapsed. Luckily the dingy was far enough away not to be swamped. A big wall of ice & water swept down on us, so high that ice actually went over the funnel. It was terrifying for a minute.

Give my regards to Helen & Bob [Dr. R.M. MacDonald] & anyone else around.

Love to you & Dad,
Bob.

St. John's Nwfd.
C.G.S. Arras
June 27/37.

Dear Mary and Dad:-

In St. Johns this evening having stopped off for the night en route for Cape Broyle. Business very quiet — have seen no patients since Saturday & we have been cruising around from port to port looking for vessels. We are into the squid era of bait now & it is pretty scarce. Good fun to watch the natives of the town jigging squid of an evening. In any of these harbors there will be as many as 50 dories containing most of the available inhabitants of the town, industriously jigging. As each vessel takes about 65,000 squid to a baiting they need all they can get. At the entrance to the harbor will usually be a school of "squid hounds", "puffin pigs" or to be correct black fish, which play on the squid & chase him into the arms of his friend, man, skulking in the harbors.

Our first mate is down with a heart attack to-day. If I get all these crocks back to N.S. I'll consider myself lucky. The first mate has had a previous attack of coronary thrombosis & more recently an otitis media [inflammation of middle ear] with associated paralysis of some of the eye muscles, the second mate developed a hernia the other day. One of the men forward has heart disease & developed the worst attack of paroxysmal tachycardia I ever saw a few days ago. For 24 hours his heart raced along at 300 & mine was nearly as fast from fright.

Delighted to get your picture. It's good. Am enclosing one I just got of the Arras alongside the berg in Cape Broyle harbor which blew up on us. This was just before the catastrophe so you can see how close we were. The picture was taken from the dingy, which we had put out for photographs. You might send this along to [my sister] Marg when your thru as I wrote her of the incident. As my oiler friend Munroe says when Nova Scotians see these photos they is supposed to say "My God they's brave!" Personally I think it was "fools rush in——."

Took a dingy ashore in Carbonnear this morning while we got some ice. A town of about 2000 inhabitants but looks about the size of Clementsport [N.S.].

Sunday I walked up to the Cabot Tower in the a.m. which is a high tower at the entrance of St. John's harbor. In the p.m. walked out to Bowring park which is about 2 miles out of the city.

Its terribly hot here to-day & I'm exhausted from holding this heavy pen.

Love,
Bob.

C.G.S. Arras
St. John's Nwfd.
June 30/37.

Dear Mary and Dad:-

As you will probably note am writing this from St. John's. St John's has been described by the chief engineer as the "city of a thousand stinks" & I think that very apt plus millions of flies, dirt, squalor and morons suffering from chronic malnutrition & a few very nice, fairly rich citizens. There would seem to be very little middle class here, people either being very poor or very rich. The city is about 30,000 people, built on the side of a mountain involving much climbing, has one paved street, (the rest being cobblestones) & 4 street cars. The street cars & railway are the old, narrow guage English style.

The stores look exactly like Herb Hicks in Clementsport, old wooden buildings with faded wallpaper or other stimulating articles as window displays, everything all junked together on one counter. Every so often one finds 5 or 6 of these general stores under one roof & lo & behold, they have an elevator or sliding cashboxes

etc. For example this morning I saw a store with one window filled with Dr. Wests tooth brushes and the other filled with hams, bacon & sausages.

They have a fairly nice hotel here, the Newfoundland, way down at one end of the city but it looks pretty sloppy & countrified compared with ours [Digby Pines or Lord Nelson in Halifax]. There is a nice building however.

Most of the city lives in miserable shacks & only about 1/3 has plumbing or sewerage I am told. I suspect that is an under estimation. Anyhow the rest of the city deposits all their slops, sewerage etc in pails which are put outside at 12:00 midnight & a wagon known as the "honey cart" picks it up for dumpage. A modern hygenist would go crazy here.

There are a couple of nice parks I understand in town & the hospital which I expect to see to-morrow. To-morrow is also a holiday here, Remembrance [Beau-mont-Hamel] Day.

Our money etc. has not arrived here so we'll be here till Friday I guess. I have a patient aboard now with an infected knee, getting continuous hot pads.

Got Mary's letter here when we came in. Glad you are finding some company in Halifax. Also very glad you had [Dorothy] Gill [later his head nurse] down.

July 1/37.

Just a slight progress note as I got tired last night. Had a nice walk this a.m. out to the residential section of the town, some beautiful mansions out that way. Also had to open my patient's leg which I did under local anaesthesia which worked well. Got your letter from Digby last night. Hope to go out to the Park this p.m. if it keeps from raining which looks doubtful. July 1 is also a holiday in this country it being Remembrance Day—for 1914-1915.

Guess I better get this in the mail now.

Love to you both,
Bob.

C.G.S. Arras
St. John's Nwfd.
July 2/37.

Dear Dad:-

Don't just know when this will reach Digby but suspect it will be somewhere in the vicinity of the 10th. Anyhow congratulations & many happy returns of the day. Sorry can't be there with you. However my thoughts will be with you with the deepest pride, respect & affection.

Sincerely,
Bob.

C.G.S. Arras
en route to Capelin Bay
July 5/37.

Dear Mary & Dad:-

I suppose you ignorant Nova Scotians actually don't know what a capelin is. At the risk of having you say you knew all the time I'll tell you. A capelin is a small fish a little larger than our smelt, not bad eating but pretty oily which come in here literally in droves & which the fishermen use as bait. They get about 14 dory loads to a baiting which last them about a week & with which they catch from 500 - 1000 cantles (120 lbs.-dry) of fish. My figures are approximately correct — God knows how approximate.

Left St. Johns Saturday a.m. (7 o'clock) and arrived in Cape Royal [Broyle] about 11 o'clock. We spend our time now cruising between Cape Royal [Broyle] & Aquafort, a distance of some 15 miles going into the various harbors looking for vessels. Usually we find them & then the work starts. Have had several bad hand infections lately & have become quite proud of my skill with novocain & a knife. I guess I learn't better than I knew. However that will all be blown away in a day or so when I get one that doesn't act so well.

Saturday night we were in Aquafort and a whaler came in with a big whale in tow. He was of the variety known as fin whale — so named because they have an extra fin on the bottom. Other varieties are the "humpback" [...] the sulpher bottom with a yellow belly, and the sperm who shoots two spouts when he blows. This fellow was 62 ft. long & weighed about 50 tons — a medium-sized animal they tell me. Each whale is worth around \$500 & this one steamer has got 31 since May 10th. They harpoon them & after they are dead blow air into them & then leave them floating with a flag on denoting ownership till they are ready to go home. — To date have had about 180 cases. Lately have had some interesting ones including pneumonia, beri-beri, glaucoma, carcinoma of rectum, etc. The experience is good.

Last night myself, the second mate (who is a lot like [Pines' carpenter] Jack Curtiss) & second engineer went for a walk, cut an alder pole & caught a nice fish with it & ended up in the house which serves as a post office at an informal dance where they were doing some wild Newfoundland frolic known as the "Lancers." Everybody is most hospitable & intent on giving you a good time.

This effort exhausts me for the time. It is a bit disconnected as I've written between patients.

Regards to all.

Love to you both
Bob

P.S. I've found a phonograph on board with a first rate selection of records — Schuberts Ave Maria, Serenade & Song of Love, Victor Herberts favorites, the Mikado, Bohemian Girl, Chocolate Soldier, Student Prince, Rigoletto & Faust [—] so am getting on well.

July 6/37.
C.G.S. Arras
Cape Broyle.

Dear Dad & Mary:—

Just time for a line before the bi-weekly mail goes ashore. Intended to write this earlier but have spent the afternoon pulling teeth with 1 hour out for sleeping. Have pulled 12 teeth to-day & thats a small day. A dentist would get on better at this job. However my dentistry is very successful — all my anaesthetics working well and my reputation as a painless extractor is spreading which increases business.

One of my infected fingers went blooey & is going to have a bad result I'm afraid — his ship has gone home so he'll be able to get proper surgery.

Was into a house last night to see a young woman 24, sick with diarrhoia & abdominal pain for 6 months, who in my opinion has simply starved to death — the family of 3 is on the dole. In her bed room (it was raining) I had a hard job to find a dry spot to sit down. Conditions along the coast are hellish— no Dr. for 90 miles & three quarters of the people starving.

Your last letter received was that of June 30/37, containing the Dominion Council results, also election news. We keep up on the news pretty well as we have several radios aboard & get both Halifax papers — 3 days late of course. From the papers it would seem that [fellow medical students] Roy Grant and Ron Baird got plucked in the [medical board] examinations. If so that's very tragic as both of them are out of province [students] besides being a damn steal.

Expect we'll be in St. John's again in the next few days. Accidentally got my glasses broken the other day but have them patched with adhesive so they do very well.

Lost the biggest trout of my career the other night through fishing in my stocking feet. I had borrowed one of the men's rubber boots & waded over the top. I took the things off to dry & got a beautiful trout up on the bank but couldn't get down over the rocks to get him. At that we have trout for supper nearly every night.

Love to you both,
Bob

July 11/37.
C.G.S. Arras
Aquafort, Nwfd.

Dear Dad & Mary:—

Sunday night — 9:15 p.m. — have just finished our evening tea & it is nearly bed time. As usual we've anchored out in the middle of the harbor with water on all sides. It's a nice calm night but cold, feels like a late September night home. Has been a very nice day — a little showery however. There was a shower about 6:30 p.m. & we saw the most perfect rainbows I have ever seen — two of them in the sky at the same time & all the colors showing. They formed a perfect arch over the harbor — coming down to the bank on each side — most beautiful.

Aquafort is one of the smallest of Newfoundland outports, as usual dirty, smelly & everything half-arsed. Nobody here seems to do anything completely e.g., they build a nice frame of spruce poles — saw one half of the tops off level and then get tired & never complete the other half. Saw a hen yard this morning on the beach about 20 feet square & a half dozen hens pecking on the 30 square feet that was out of the water.

Got a great nights fishing in last night. Had a devil of a walk to get there about 1 1/2 miles up hill along the main road and then a mile thru the thickest alders you ever saw. I arrived at the lake shore with two big rents in my pants but they were old anyhow. I then proceeded to fall in the lake, got my feet wet every time I turned around, loose my shoe in the lake when I was drying it & have to reach into [the water up to] my elbow to get it & to make it all worth while land the biggest fish of the evening lying flat on my back on a swamp. That's been my history of the last week, everything I've touched has broken or gone wrong — however it was just one of those weeks. Anyhow 3 of us got 22 dandy fish last night — the chief engineer & myself 5 apiece & the fireman 12. We've had trout nearly every second night for supper as I've said before, I guess.

The phonograph has just finished Schuberts "Song of Love" & "Serenade" so if the above is sort of disconnected you know why.

Have had 89 patients the last week bring my total up to 250 since we've been up here. My fame is spreading & I'm getting a lot of shore people. Since I have no competition & dont charge I'm not too proud of such success. Had a nasty hand infection last Thursday that we had to take to St. John's for hospitalization. I had an awful job getting him in & finally the Maternity Hospital was the last resort. Hospital accommodations are even worse than Halifax.

I intended to add more but the mail is going ashore now. No letters for me in the last mail. How come?

Love to you both.
Bob.

C.G.S. Arras,
St. Johns, Nwfd,
July 15/37.

Dear Mary & Dad:-

The middle of July. We're all going around with happy expressions on saying to ourselves "Half the time gone — another 6 weeks we'll be home." The Argus is ordered to Lunenburg for its exhibition Sept 6, so we'll certainly be back before then.

Got our papers last night & the first thing I spotted was [zoologist and friend] Don Ross picture & news of his new scholarship [to Cambridge]. Isn't that great. Don has certainly got what it takes.

Back in St. Johns last night & to-day. Spent all last evening looking for my patient in the various hospitals of the city & finally located him in the general. His hand is still pretty bad & he can't get out for some time yet.

Saw Dr. Tom Acker [of Dalhousie's Department of Surgery] is holding a clinic at the Salvation Army hospital. Also saw that Drs. [A.L.] MacLean & [Dean H.G.] Grant [of Dalhousie's Department of Preventative Medicine] are coming here to conduct a tuberculosis survey. See [Doctor H.B.] Altees name plastered over nearly every paper we get. He seems to be travelling widely this summer.

In a few days now we'll be leaving for the eastern coast of the island — Holyrood, Brigis, etc. as the squid are coming then & that's their bait after the capelin die off.

How is business at the [Digby] Pines? What sort of a kitchen crew have you got? How is the new car working? Who all is back that I know? Any sign of the Dominion Council [medical examination] marks?

Good that you got the books fixed. Am getting a lot of reading done. Just finished [Warwick Deeping's] "No-Hero—This." Stephens was a delightful character and so easy to understand. Also have read [Liam O'Flaherty's] the "Informer," Bernard Shaw's "Plays," [Alexis Carrel's] "Man the Unknown" & numerous other things since have been here.

Love to you both,
Bob.

C.G.S. Arras,
Hollyrood, Nwfd,
July 17/37.

Dear Mary & Dad:-

As you can see we have shifted our ground & are now up in the north eastern part of the island some 60 miles (by water — 30 by land) from St. Johns. Holyrood is the summer resort of Newfoundland as many St. Johns people come here, owning

summer homes. It is situated at the head of Conception Bay, and in close proximity are Carbonnear, the second largest town on the island 2300 people, & Harbor Grace & Brigis of about 2000. In the middle of the Bay is Belle Isle where Dominion Iron & Steel mines iron ore & there is quite a big plant there. At Baie Roberts also in the vicinity are the cable terminals for this side of the Atlantic & that also has about 2000 people. Thus we are cruising around the most populated part of Newfoundland now & its a great deal more pleasant. Tho all these towns have larger populations than Bridgetown, Digby etc. — our towns of similar size are cities compared to these. These are laid out on no definite plan [—] every fellow building a house just where he squatted — there is no business section etc. & only one or two stores in the place. They remind one a great deal of Canso.

The vessels are coming up here now for squid as bait & in the evenings the whole population of the town is out in dories “jigging” squid. I guess it makes good bait but it does fearsome things to their hands leading to many infections. However the fleet is much more scattered now & there are one or two doctors in this part of the course [coast?] so my work is cut down considerably.

Most of your letters received I guess. Too bad about your Aunt Jen. Theres a daily train service up here so mail communications are better.

In St Johns I was up to the general hospital to see “my patient.” His hand is still pretty bad but is improving. It feels very good to walk into a hospital in such a capacity. May I have many more remunerative ones!

Saw a show in St Johns the other evening — P.G. Wodehouse “Step Lively Jeeves”. Fair comedy.

Is Erastus [the shoe-shine boy] at the Pines this year? Also Elizabeth McGregor [the old housekeeper] - Give them regards if so.

Have been down to Carbonnear this p.m. & are beating it back to Hollyrood for the week end. Don't think we'll be in in time to fish. Hope we get to a dock instead of out in the middle of the harbor. Will get fishing to-morrow if I can get the captain's permission. Damn these people who can hate a man because his skin is black & yet think fishing on Sunday is a sin. Of such is the Kingdom of Heaven. Oh Yeah!

Love to you both,
Bob.

C.G.S. Arras,
St. John's
July 19/37.

Dear Mary & Dad:-

Just a line to get the mail to-morrow a.m. We were driven in here to seek refuge from the storm to-night being en route from Hollyrood to Cape Royal [Broyle].

Spend a lot of our time running round trying to find vessels. A miserable night raining & foggy. Spent the evening listening to the phonograph & playing cribbage. Most of the crew is ashore at their usual indoor sports. St. John's is the great fornication centre for the island. Apparently one does one of two things in the Newfoundland seaports, fish or fornicate, with the latter sport numbering by far the greater number of supporters. A few of us stick to fishing—I often wonder whether its [crossed out: jus] virtue or just cowardice. Undoubtedly fishing is safer & cheaper.

Had a good excursion yesterday p.m.—left the ship at one & got back at 9 p.m. A nice walk but the fishing was poor, only about 10 between 2 of us. Dr. [Norman] Gosse & a clergyman were down to see me while I was out. Sorry to have missed them but he'll be here till Saturday so I might see him yet.

Got your short missive today with Donnies [Ross'] enclosure. Very interesting. I wrote him to Cambridge after he won the second scholarship but I suppose it will be forwarded to him. Did you see where Dot Webster [of Yarmouth] got her Ph.D. & has a job with the American College of Pharmacy.

Must go now.

Love to you both,
Bob.

C.G.S. Arras
St. Johns Newfd.
July 31/37.

Dearest Mary & Dad:-

Tomorrow is the 1st. of August. Hurrah, the month we come home in. For the last 10 days everybody has been saying to each other, 'July has gone.' 'Our last month!'

Came in here Thursday p.m. & coaled yesterday. Also was pay day so that made it a little more pleasant. I went shopping & bought a new pair of shoes and a pair of grey flannels—both of which are comparatively cheap here.

Last night went to see Naughty Marietta for the 3rd or 4th time.

We are sailing at noon for Holyrood—possibly back here tomorrow night—Cape Broyle Monday & back to St. Johns for the regatta Weds.

I see Dean Grant is sailing from here on the Fort Amherst this a.m. Am going to try to drop in for a minute.

Was to the hospital yesterday to see a patient of mine & got some records of some I have seen along the shore. It's great to go in as a visiting physician instead of the lowest form of life—my[,] the service you get. I find such sudden rises to power very hard to encompass.

The Newfoundland Hotel here seems to be very busy. I was up the other day looking for Dr. [Norman H.] Gosse & they were turning people away. Of course that day the [ship] Fort Townsend was in and they had a medical convention there.

Love to you both,
Bob.

C.G.S. Arras
St. Johns, Nwfd,
Aug. 9/37.

Dear Mary & Marg:-

Here we are back in St. Johns again. Had a somewhat uneventful trip down. Terrifically hot on the train to North Sydney. Myself & a bank clerk from Jamaica were the only male occupants of the pullman, the rest being entirely old women. It was interesting at Mulgrave to see them break the train up into three sections, run it on to the boat & ferry it across the strait. It was cooler in Cape Breton & it certainly is a pretty country tho I guess I saw the poorest part of it. Got in North Sydney about 8:30 & immediately to the Caribou [ferry]. We had a lovely trip across, dead smooth & I had a good sleep. I think the most lonely place in the world is the promenade deck of a boat on a beautiful clear star lit night by yourself. Was awakened at 6:30 at Port Aux Basque — a foggy morning but it soon cleared & became very hot. Had to pass through the customs but that was accomplished without difficulty. Breakfast on the train and at 8:30 a.m. started on the 26 hour trip to St. Johns. I rode in the smoker most of the way up as it has the most comfortable chair[s] in it. There were some nice people aboard — Dr. Fitzgerald a young medico from McGill who is their physician at the Cornerbrook hospital, — my old pal [Norman] Gosse again — and a Miss Nyrne, a nurse from New York. Her brother Cyril went to Dalhousie 1 1/2 years with me before he got kicked out. He finally graduated from Tufts (God knows how) & is now interning at St. Josephs hospital in St. Johns. Anyhow she is very nice & interesting as she had graduated from the Royal Vic in Montreal, taken a course in anaesthetics at John Hopkins & for the past 5 years has given anaesthetics at some New York hospital. This winter she is going to Honolulu to establish an anaesthetics unit in some hospital there.

Had a good sleep on the train but somewhat marred by the fact that there were no buttons on my berth curtains & every time someone passed down the aisle they would flop open leaving me a sort of sleeping beauty in a circle of light.

Got a telegram the next a.m. that the Arras was in Holyrood so I popped off there instead of St. Johns. Had a fairly busy day seeing some 25 patients getting back.

Yesterday was very hot & we loafed most of the time. Had a nice walk to Bowring Park last night.

Found letters from you both & Don Ross waiting for me here.

Am enclosing copy of my letter to Mr. Mathews [of the Canadian Pacific Railway for which his father worked].

Love,
Bob.

Aug 12, 1937
C.G.S. Arras
enroute Carbonnear.

Dear Mary & Marg:-

I'm afraid this will be a very short letter as I can not remember nothing exceptional since my last appearance in print. As already noted spent Monday in St. Johns and that evening had a nice walk and went to see a show "Charlie Chan at the Opera". Just fair. Methinks it was sort of a grown up Nick Carter or Tom Swift.

Tuesday a.m. toddled up to Carbonnear where we stayed all night. Had a nice walk there. It's a pretty town, about 2,000 people, some beautiful homes but very dusty. William Duff, M.P. for Guysborough(?) came from there.

Yesterday we went to Holyrood & as a result went on a big fishing tour last night. Got a few fish and many fly bites—the usual order of proceedings.

Back again to Carbonnear now and probably into St. Johns to-night to get our mail.

Vessels are few and far between now & life is very tranquil. Numerous forest fires raging in the country & the air is filled with smoke. Still pretty hot.

I'm dividing my time between Disease of Children & Harry Cushing [and] so manage to keep employed.

Love to you both,
Bob

C.G.S. Arras
Carbonnear, Nwfd.
Aug 16/37.

Dear Mary:-

Your letter & one from Marg. arrived Saturday . I am sorry Marg. decided to go back but I felt all along it was the best thing. Its very dreary around those places all by yourself. However I'm glad she stayed as long as she did & particularly glad that you & she got better acquainted. Her letter as usual was full of interest and contained considerable advice — much of it I'm afraid I rather needed.

Am not going to bother forwarding Donnies [Ross'] letter to you as it was very short & really just a thank-you for my letter of congratulation. However I'll try to give you the high spots. He's still in Plymouth & enjoying himself very much. Dixie and [Ron] Hayes [biology professors at Dalhousie] have been there. Shortly he leaves for London, then Manchester & then a 2 week trip in Germany — thus a months loafing before Cambridge. It will be great to see him again.

As I've already mentioned life here has grown very quiet — rarely do we see a Dutchman [Lunenburg vessel] & only the occasional Newfie. I feel its been a very good summer & that I've learned a good deal I didn't know before (things that I didn't know I didn't know — thats nearly as Dutch as "come along wid."[]) Struck an interesting problem last evening — a nice young lad some three weeks after suspicious intercourse in which the veins of his penis had been torn develops a sore — is it syphilitic or merely infection around the torn blood vessel? Its too much for me. Anyhow I bundled him off to St Johns for a Kahn, smears etc.

Had a very unsuccessful fishing trip yesterday walking miles & not catching a damn thing. Any God's amount of blueberries however — bushes filled with them as large as a small marble. Thus we've been eating many & the usual crop of summer diaorrhoeas for which I unhesitatingly advise castor oil followed by bismuth.

Shocked to read of the death of Dougald Macgillivray [of Halifax]. He was a pompous, self-righteous old bastard but he did a lot of good for the community which can ill afford to loose him. I have written Pat Evans & his wife. Also as you know wrote Mr. Matthews & Mrs. Preston [presumably all friends of his late father]. Nova Scotia has been hit hard this summer — particularly Dalhousie.

Don't be worrying about anything my darling. We may not always know what we're doing but with ordinary luck we'll follow the good old British policy of "blundering" through. The main thing is we'll soon be together & I've missed you more the last few days than ever before. Soon — dearest.

All my love for always,
Bob

C.G.S. Arras,
St. Johns, Nwfd,
Aug 21/37.

Dearest Mary:-

I received your letter yesterday re your removal, court etc. Glad you like your new quarters. Also good that the camp was sold. I want to get some of the fishing tackle out before its too late. I wonder if [Digby Pines engineer] Ralph's managed to do anything with the car. Glad to hear of the extra letters you have been receiving. Are the Kelsey's [regular American summer visitors to the Pines] there now?

We had a pretty busy week with 60 vessels of various kinds & I've done about 35 dental extractions. It was funny in Fairyland [sic] yesterday. We went in to speak [to] the Sir Ernest Pitts to see if she had any sick men. That was quickly accomplished but before we could get turned around the first motor boat had arrived from the shore with 5 men desirous of tooth extractions. By the time I had done them there were some 15 more waiting & more coming all the time. We finally had to throw up our hands and say — "No more to-day."

Struck good fishing in Cape Broyle Thursday night but after having caught 3 we heard the Arras whistle blowing four mournful blasts — return immediately. The couple of miles out of the woods was done in jig time & I got on board to find a fisherman with a very sore hand enveloped (the hand) in some yards of bandage. I finally waded through this & found a small crack at the base of the index finger! The air was blue for a time.

There is no good of writing any letters here after Weds. 25 i.e. to arrive here Aug. 28, as we'll almost certainly be leaving by that time. Just when we get home is problematical and the trip will take 3-4 days. Be that as it may the time is getting very short.

All my love for always,
Bob

St. John's, Nfwd
Aug 24/37

Dearest Mary:-

I guess this will be my last letter from Newfoundland. We're in port now getting ready for the home crossing—today the steam is all off and they are cleaning boiler tubes, fixing the fire wall, etc. in preparation. These will be finished on Thursday or Friday & then we're homeward bound. We plan to be in Canso the 31st I believe & thus in Halifax a day or two later. I will proceed to Digby as soon as possible. It will probably be necessary to spend one day or so in Halifax chequing drugs etc. before leaving. Certainly I will be in Digby by the weekend of Sept. 4th & perhaps earlier.

It's a cold miserable day here—raining like the devil & with the steam off one would think we were on a refrigerator ship. There are several such animals around here—buying blueberries at the magnificent sum of 10 cents a gallon for the New York market. There was a big riot in one of the outports the other day because the relief authorities wanted to subtract from the dole the amount obtained from blueberrying. The men claimed they were out more shoe leather than they made.

On Sunday last myself, Sparks & the chief engineer paid a visit to the governor general's mansion which was open to the public and duly inscribed our names in their Excellencies visitors book among all the dignitaries of "Britain's oldest and

loyalest colony." His ground, gardens, etc. were lovely & I took great pleasure in swiping a green pea from his garden—the only fresh one I have had this year.

Then we toddled out to Mundy's Pond by the Ropeworks at the other end of the city where a regatta was in progress. As I think I have remarked before they take their regattas & garden parties very seriously—all held Sunday afternoons, ending with a dance in the evening from which no-body expects to go home till Monday morning. This last Sunday they had one at Harbour Grace. An excursion boat came from Belle Isle (20 minutes away)—leaving Belle Isle at 3 p.m. Sunday & returning from Harbour Grace at 4 a.m. Monday. Thus do the simple fisher folk amuse themselves.

Am reading a very interesting book now—40 years for Labrador—the autobiography of Sir Wilfred Grenville—a truly wonderful man. Just finished the "Three Musketeers" & was absorbed by it.

Well dearest until next week,
All my love for always,
Bob.
